APEC Membership for India

*592. SHRI P. UPENDRA:
SHRI CHIMANBHAI MEHTA:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that India is trying for membership of Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum;

(b) if so, what are the details thereof;

(c) what are the obligations of APEC with regard to bringing down tariffs and other matters;

(d) what are the highest and lowest tariffs in APEC countries; and

(e) whether they impose quota restrictions while keeping down their tariffs?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) and (b) India has, since the Seoul Ministerial Meeting of APEC in October, 1991, been indicating its interest in participating in the APEC. The APEC Summit Meeting held in Seattle in November, 1993 took a decision to freezed the membership of APEC for three years. The question of India's admission into APEC, therefore, cannot be considered before 1997.

Pending membership, India has expressed its interest to participate in APEC Working Group activities of priority interest. The APEC Ministerial Meeting held at Bogor (Indonesia) in November, 1994 decided to ask the APEC Senior Officials to submit to the 1995 Ministerial Meeting criteria and principles for participation of non-members in APEC Working Groups. The participation of India and other non-members in the APEC Working Groups will, therefore, be considered after a decision on this is taken at the Third Summit.

(c) to (e) The APEC Economic Leaders at their second meeting held at Bogor (Indonesia) on November 15, 1994 announced their commitment to complete the achievement of their goal of free and open trade and investment in Asia-Pacific no later than 2020 for developing countries and 2010 for industrialised countries, by reducing trade barriers and by promoting the free flow of goods, services and capital. APEC economies are yet to spell out clearly the modalities of achieving free trade and investment by 2020 and are working on an action agenda to be considered at the Third APEC Summit in Osaka in November, 1995.

The highest and the lowest tariffs in the APEC economies range from 140% to 0% respectively.

Collection of Toll Tax on National Highways

*593. SHRI MOOLCHAND MEENA:
SHRI SANJAY DALMIA:

Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state:

(a) whether toll tax is being collected in respect of the bridges constructed on the national highways; and

(b) if so, the time upto which the toll tax is likely to be collected in respect of the bridges at Jhansi-Kanpur-Lucknow highway over Ganga and Yamuna rivers?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI JAGDISH TYTLER): (a) Yes, Sir. Fee is collected on permanent bridges costing more than Rs. 100 lakhs.

(b) As per present projection, collection of fee is likely to continue upto December, 1997 on Ganga bridge and May, 2000 on Yamuna bridge. This will, however, depend upon the volume of traffic.

Import of Wagons

*594. SHRI J.S. RAJU:
SHRI SANJAY DALMIA:

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are importing wagons for Railways; and